



April 2, 2026

The Honorable Joseph McNamara  
Chair, House Education Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7907

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) and our 12,000 members, I write to express our strong support for this legislation which strengthens the structure and representation of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and the Rhode Island Board of Education.

This legislation represents a thoughtful and meaningful step toward ensuring that the voices of those most directly connected to our public education system—educators and students—are more fully reflected in statewide decision-making. By expanding the membership of the Council and Board, and by providing a formal voting role for both the Rhode Island Teacher of the Year and the chairperson of the Student Advisory Council, this bill helps ensure that policies are informed by lived experience in our classrooms and schools.

Educators bring a critical, ground-level perspective on how policies translate into practice. The inclusion of the Teacher of the Year as a voting member recognizes the professionalism, expertise, and leadership of Rhode Island's educators. A core value of NEARI is uplifting educator and this legislation accomplishes this. Similarly, elevating student voice through the Student Advisory Council and granting its chair a voting role reinforces the importance of student-centered policymaking. Students experience firsthand the impacts of educational policy, and their input is invaluable in shaping a system that meets their needs.

We also appreciate that this legislation builds on existing structures in a way that promotes consistency and clarity. By formalizing and strengthening these roles within statute, the bill provides clearer guidance on governance while maintaining continuity in how the Board and Council operate. This is a common-sense approach that enhances transparency, stability, and confidence in the state's education leadership framework.

With that said, we encourage continued attention to ensuring that these additional responsibilities are supported with appropriate orientation and resources so that both educator and student representatives can effectively participate in the important work of the Board and Council.

We are grateful to the sponsors of this legislation for their commitment to inclusive and representative educational governance, and for recognizing the importance of incorporating educator and student perspectives into decision-making at the highest levels.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support and pass this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alexander Lucini  
Government Relations Director, NEARI